

Message Text

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ORIGIN INR-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SSM-03 IO-13 OC-06 CCO-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 SS-15 NSC-05 AID-05 /065 R

DRAFTED BY INR/RNA/NE:AAVACCARO
APPROVED BY INR/RNA:PHSTODDARD
SSM-CWKONTOS

-----030630 126011 /11

R 030159Z MAR 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 046896

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 264 - MARCH 2, 1977

1. LEBANON. AS SPORADIC CLASHES CONTINUE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, LEBANESE AUTHORITIES ARE INQUIRING AS TO THE FEASIBILITY OF SENDING UN TROOPS TO THAT REGION. PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS MET WITH THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR YESTERDAY AND MADE THE SAME INQUIRIES ABOUT A UN FORCE THAT HE HAD MADE TO AMBASSADOR PARKER THE PREVIOUS DAY.

2. IN RESPONSE TO PRESS REPORTS OF BOUTROS' INITIATIVE, ISRAELI DEFENSE MINISTER PERES WAS QUOTED BY ISRAELI RADIO YESTERDAY AS SAYING THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON IS PREFERABLE TO A UN FORCE. THE LATTER, PERES SAID, IS USABLE ONLY IN CALM AREAS; IT IS MEANT TO REPORT AND TO CALM TENSIONS; IT IS NOT SUITABLE FOR REGIONS WHICH ARE NOT TRANQUIL.

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3. SAUDI ARABIA ANNOUNCED YESTERDAY THAT IT HAS DECIDED TO GIVE LEBANON \$17 MILLION. TALKS WERE REPORTEDLY STILL

CONTINUING BETWEEN LEBANON AND SAUDI ARABIA ON THE LATTER;S CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS RECONSTRUCTION OF LEBANON WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF A GENERAL ARAB PLAN. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

4. PALESTINIANS. THERE ARE INCREASING INDICATIONS THAT PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL (PNC) MEETINGSSCHEDULED FOR MARCH 12 WILL NOT ADOPT ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN PLO POLICY OR IN THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL CHARTER, DESPITE PRESSURE FROM ASAD AND SADAT TO DO SO. A RELIABLE DIPLOMATIC SOURCE IN CAIRO NOTED THAT THE DIRECTOR OF THE PLO'S CAIRO OFFICE HAD SAID THAT THE PNC IS LIKELY TO PRODUCE ONLY A RESTATEMENT OF PREVIOUS PLO POLICY BECAUSE ITS LEADERSHIP WISHES TO DELAY ANY DECISIONS WHICH WOULD ALTER CURRENT POLICY OR DEFINE A JORDANIAN-PALESTINIAN RELATIONSHIP. PNC CHAIRMAN FAHUM WAS SIMILARLY NEGATIVE IN A RECENT INTERVIEW ABOUT THE PROSPECT THAT THE PNC WOULD ADOPT A MORE MODERATE POSITION AND AMEND THE PALESTINIAN CHARTER TO ACCEPT ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN MINI-STATE.

5. THE PLO'S CAIRO REPRESENTATIVE STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT MOST PLO LEADERS HAVE DISMISSED SADAT'S DESIRE FOR A PRE-GENEVA LINKAGE BETWEEN JORDAN AND THE PLO AS TOTALLY UNREALISTIC. IN THEIR VIEW, SUCH A LINK IS AN ATTEMPT TO "BUILD A 55TH FLOOR ON A BUILDING WITHOUT A FOUNDATION." THE PLO, HE SAID, WILL DEFINE ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH JORDAN ONLY WHEN THE PLO HAS ACQUIRED ITS OWN PALESTINIAN TERRITORY.

6. SADAT HAS STATED PUBLICLY, HOWEVER, THAT ARAFAT HAS AGREED TO PURSUE A POSSIBLE PRE-GENEVA LINKAGE. THERE IS A REAL DANGER THAT SADAT MAY BE OVERESTIMATING

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HIS INFLUENCE OVER ARAFAT AND ARAFAT'S ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THE PNC. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT SADAT IS EXERTING CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO ENSURE A CONSTRUCTIVE OUTCOME FOR THE PNC ON THIS AND OTHER ISSUES. (CONFIDENTIAL)

7. ISRAEL. IF THE LABOR PARTY WINS THE GENERAL ELECTION IN MAY, PRIME MINISTER RABIN WILL REAPPOINT HIS RIVAL, SHIMON PERES, AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE, ACCORDING TO PARTY SOURCES. RABIN EARLIER HAD SAID HE WOULD APPOINT PERES TO A KEY POST, BUT HE HAD DECLINED TO BE MORE SPECIFIC. THE PRIME MINISTER REPORTEDLY WAS PLANNING TO TAKE THE DEFENSE POST HIMSELF. LABOR PARTY OFFICIALS, HEADED BY PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL MEIR ZARMI,

APPARENTLY PERSUADED RABIN LAST WEEKEND TO CHANGE HIS MIND. THE QUESTION OF REPRESENTATION IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT FOR PERES' SUPPORTERS REMAINS TO BE WORKED OUT, ACCORDING TO PARTY OFFICIALS.

8. EMBASSY TEL AVIV HAS NOTED THAT MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE DAYAN WILL NOT LEAVE THE LABOR PARTY AS A RESULT OF THE PARTY CONVENTION'S REBUFF OF HIS MORE HARDLINE PLATFORM AMENDMENTS. NEVERTHELESS, DAYAN HAS NOT YET PUBLICLY RULED THIS OUT. EVEN IF HE REMAINS IN THE PARTY AND ACCEPTS A PLACE ON THE ALIGNMENT'S KNESSET LIST, HOWEVER, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW ACTIVE HE WILL BE IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

9. A NIGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL COMMENTED TO EMBASSY LAGOS THAT NIGERIA WAS "RETHINKING" ITS MIDEAST POLICY AND ASSERTED THAT SIMILAR REASSESSMENTS WERE TAKING PLACE ALL OVER AFRICA. HE CAUTIONED THAT NO IMMEDIATE RAPPROCHEMENT WITH ISRAEL WOULD OCCUR, BUT INDICATED THAT THIS WOULD BE THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME. THE REASON, HE INDICATED, WAS THE AFRICAN VIEW THAT THE ARABS HAD SHOWN

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LITTLE INTEREST IN AFRICA'S PROBLEMS (SOUTH AFRICA, HIGH OIL PRICES) AND HAD NOT RECIPROCATED AFRICA'S SUPPORT OF ARAB POLICIES IN THE MIDEAST. (CONFIDENTIAL)

10. UN. SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM SUBMITTED A REPORT ON HIS MIDEAST MISSION TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL ON FEBRUARY 28. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE REPORT NOTED THAT THE MOST IMMEDIATE OBSTACLE TO RECONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE WAS THE QUESTION OF THE PLO'S PARTICIPATION. WALDHEIM OBSERVED THAT BOTH THE ISRAELIS AND THE PALESTINIANS HAD TO CHANGE THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD EACH OTHER BEFORE THIS HURDLE COULD BE OVERCOME. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY, WALDHEIM STATED THAT THE BEST THAT COULD BE HOPED FOR WAS A RECONVENING OF GENEVA "IN THE SECOND HALF OF THIS YEAR", A VIEW WHICH WAS IMPLIED IN HIS OFFICIAL REPORT. (UNCLASSIFIED)

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE, INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 03-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977STATE046896
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: AAVACCARO
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770072-1081
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770396/aaaadgyo.tel
Line Count: 156
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fc0538be-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN INR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3217849
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INTSUM 264 - MARCH 2, 1977
TAGS: PINR, EG, IS, UN
To: SINAI
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fc0538be-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009